

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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1. [redacted] the population of Minsk (N 53-50, E 27-35) to be 350,000. About eighty percent of the city was destroyed during World War II, but the reconstruction begun immediately after the war was very thorough. Many old buildings were razed and large new ones were erected in their place. New streets were also built. Construction was still under way in 1953, and the appearance of the city was much better than it had been before the war. Traces of the war were still evident on the outskirts of the city, but reconstruction was taking place everywhere.

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2. Most of the streets in Minsk were straight. Many of them were paved with asphalt, and many were of cobblestone. The streets were narrow in those parts of town, e.g., the Nyamigi district, where no reconstruction work had been undertaken. The new streets were broad and had wide sidewalks. All the streets were planted with linden, chestnut, ash, and other varieties of trees. The main street, prospekt imeni Stalina, which was rebuilt after the war, was about 30 m wide and was paved with asphalt. Sidewalks about ten meters wide ran along both sides of the street. The heaviest traffic in Minsk was on prospekt imeni Stalina, where most of the large stores were located. Militia directed traffic at the intersections of prospekt imeni Stalina. All the buildings on this street were of brick construction and had five or six stories. Other streets in Minsk were Komsomolskaya, Sovetskaya, Mesninova, Kirova, Nyamiga, and Dolgobrodskaya. All the streets were electrically lighted. Along most of the main streets, including prospekt imeni Stalina, electric lights ran along both sides of the street and were supported by iron posts; on some important streets, however, lamps hung in the middle of the street. On the remaining streets, the lamp posts were wooden.

3. House numbers were even on one side of the street and odd on the other side. When more than one house had the same number, a letter was affixed to the number, e.g., 28a and 28b. Most of the houses had from three to six stories, and some government buildings had as many as thirteen stories. Most of the buildings were of brick construction, stuccoed and whitewashed. On the outskirts of the city, the buildings were one-story wooden structures and were privately owned. State-owned houses were large, brick apartment buildings.

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Most apartments in new buildings consisted of three rooms. These buildings were steam heated and had large windows. There were no elevators in State-owned apartment houses. The ground floors of dwelling houses were occupied by stores. Private homes had only two rooms and a kitchen, and the fuel used was coal, wood, or peat. Offices were located in special buildings.

4. All the Republic administrative offices were in Minsk and were located in various parts of the city. The Government House /Dom pravitelstva/ was in the center of town on Sovetskaya ulitsa. The Central Committee of the Communist Party had offices near a theater. The MVD occupied a very large building on prospekt imeni Stalina; this building took up an entire block.
5. A large two-story railroad station had the following: Ticket windows for long distance trains, a restaurant, a waiting room for civilians and one for servicemen, telephones, a telegraph office, a lunch room, an airlines ticket office, a barber shop, and a room for mothers and children. Passenger trains were always crowded, and it was difficult to obtain tickets. Sometimes one stood in line for several hours and was still not able to buy a ticket. No one was allowed to board a train more than forty minutes before departure time.
6. Public transportation consisted of streetcars, buses, trolleybuses, and taxis. The streetcar fare was 30 kopeks, and the bus and trolleybus fare was 50 kopeks. There were always many persons waiting at the streetcar, bus, and trolleybus stops, and the conveyances were always crowded. There were no streetcars on the main streets of Minsk, only trolleybuses and buses. The taxis were Pobedas and were distinguished from other cars by a black checked stripe which went around the body of the car. The fare was two rubles per kilometer, and one had to pay for a round trip. Although anyone could use the taxis, few persons could afford to ride in them.
7. There were motor transport bases in Minsk, where organizations could obtain the use of vehicles. These vehicles were not issued for such personal uses as transporting one's family from one place of residence to another.
8. Among the good restaurants in Minsk were the Belarus and the railroad restaurant. Prices in restaurants were high; a dinner without drinks cost about 15 rubles. Restaurants charged 44 rubles for a liter of Moskovskaya vodka, 45 kopeks for a cup of tea, and 1.5 to 3 rubles for soup. The service was very slow, and sometimes one had to wait about an hour before being served dinner. The prices in restaurants /stolovaya/ and tea rooms were lower, but the food was much worse. Dinner at a stolovaya cost four or five rubles.
9. The newspaper Zvyazda was a daily which was published only in Belorussian. Sovetskaya belorussiya was a daily which was published only in Russian. Nastavnitskaya gazeta was printed in Belorussian. The newspaper Kolkhoznaya pravda appeared in both Russian and Belorussian. The magazines Vozhyk, Polyanya, and Kommunist belarusi were printed in Belorussian. The Pioneer newspaper Pioner belarusi was put out in Belorussian.
10. Before the war there had been a large monument to Lenin near the Dom pravitelstva, but it had been destroyed during World War II. After the war, it was recast after the old model in Leningrad and erected again. A huge monument to Stalin, which was built after the war, was located on Svoboda Square. There was also a bust of Yanka Kupala in the small public garden near the Theater of Drama.
11. A university was located on Sovetskaya ulitsa. Other institutions of learning included the Academy of Sciences of the Belorussian SSR, the Polytechnic Institute, the Medical Institute, the Pedagogical Institute, the Institute of Physical Culture, and a conservatory.

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12. Plays which were put on at the Yanka Kupala Theater of Drama were presented in Belorussian. Operas were performed in both Belorussian and Russian. The city also had a ballet theater, a Russian theater, and several movie houses. Theater tickets cost from eight to fifteen rubles and movie tickets from three to ten rubles.

13. The Belarus Hotel was on ulitsa Kirova, and a room could be obtained for about 16 rubles a day. Among the small public gardens in Minsk was the Park Gorkogo.

14. The following are some industrial installations which were located in Minsk.

- A tractor factory, which was constructed in 1948. This plant specialized in the manufacture of the Belarus-type tractor, which was used in agriculture.
- A bicycle factory, which manufactured bicycles bearing the trade-mark MVZ.
- An automobile plant, which was constructed after World War II. This factory specialized in the production of dump trucks with a 24-ton capacity. These trucks had three axles and a wheel diameter of approximately 1.7 m. The plant also manufactured other types of trucks, but source could give no further information.
- Radio Plant imeni Molotova, which was constructed after World War II. It manufactured Partisan I and Partisan II radio receiving sets equipped with five tubes, three wave-length bands (long, medium, short), and a phonograph connection. Both of these types were manufactured primarily for export. They bore the inscription in English "Made in USSR". Since they were practically unobtainable in the USSR, source did not know the local price. In addition to the Partisan-type radio, the plant manufactured another type of radio receiving set with the trade-mark Belarus. This radio had twelve tubes, three or four wave-length bands, and a phonograph connection. The price of the Belarus set in the USSR was over 1,000 rubles. Production of this radio set was begun in 1951 or 1952. This plant also manufactured an earphone receiving set, the Komsomolets, which sold for 42 rubles.
- Shoe Factory imeni Kaganovicha, which was probably constructed prior to World War II. It manufactured men's and women's shoes and boots, and also rubber boots. The factory was quite large, and it serviced a very large area.

1. [redacted] Comment: In 1948, according to figures from local elections, the population of Minsk was 231,000.

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